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SENSITIVE  
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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E AND DRL  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS  
STATE FOR G/TIP, G-ACBLANK, INL, PRM, AF/RSA

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KTIP](#) [SOCI](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: 2008 TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

REF: 08 STATE 132759

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1. (SBU) ERITREA'S TIP SITUATION:  
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--A. Information on trafficking in persons was scarce during the reporting year. The government remained elusive to requests to provide information for this report and published neither data nor statistics regarding TIP. Various organizations have small-scale projects to address TIP, specifically the smuggling and/or trafficking of individuals fleeing from Eritrea into countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, or Sudan.

--B. Eritrea was not a country of either transit or destination for trafficking in persons, but may have been a country of origin; large numbers of migrant workers departed Eritrea in search of work, particularly to the Gulf States. Additionally, the GSE's forced recruitment of labor meets the TIP definitions in refTel paragraph 15. Also, thousands of Eritreans fled the country illegally, mostly to Sudan, Kenya, and Ethiopia. UN, NGO, and post observations indicate that TIP by private actors was not a significant problem in Eritrea.

--C. Eritrea's totalitarian government operated without a constitution, and all power resided in the executive. The GSE conscripted large numbers of men from ages 18 - 54 and women from ages 18 - 47 into compulsory national service. National service workers were not allowed to choose their jobs, change jobs, travel within Eritrea without written permission, or obtain passports or exit visas for international travel. The length of service was indefinite, with many conscriptees serving in their positions for over ten years. The World Bank estimated that 420,000 Eritreans work in national service jobs, with approximately half working in civilian occupations, either as government civil service employees or in state-owned/directed commercial enterprises (including construction companies and Eritrea's merchant fleet). The GSE justified labor conscription based on "national security" due to the unresolved situation on the border with Ethiopia, which sparked a war between the countries from 1998 - 2000.

All Eritrean high school seniors, except those receiving medical waivers, were required to complete mandatory military training prior to their final year of high school. Those who do not complete the training or receive a waiver were not allowed to continue their studies, graduate, or apply for tertiary education.

The GSE denied families of students not completing military training or going AWOL the student's share of rations. (Note: Basic food imports are controlled by the GSE and allocated by ration coupons. Food purchased on the open market is very expensive by local standards. End Note.)

--D. As the economic situation in Eritrea continues to deteriorate, both the poor and the young remain vulnerable to trafficking. Additionally, all Eritreans of national service age remain subject to conscription into below-minimum wage jobs.

--E. Trafficking took two forms. First, the GSE's National Service policies give the government full autonomy over where, when, and how a person is employed. Second, due to the increasing number of individuals fleeing the country, there is a potential for individuals or groups to take advantage of the poor by selling them into forced labor in neighboring countries.

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12. (SBU) Setting the Scene for the Government's Anti-TIP Efforts:  
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--A. The government does not directly acknowledge that trafficking is a problem in the country. However, there have been extensive efforts to curb the flow of Eritreans illegally leaving the country.

--B. The Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare (MLHW) oversees the trafficking portfolio, but individual cases are reportedly handled by the Eritrean embassy in the country to which trafficking

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occurred.

--C. Eritrea is an extremely poor country, leaving the GSE with limited means to address its myriad internal challenges.

--D. Eritrean media, all state-owned, made neither public announcements nor media presentations regarding TIP, which indicated the GSE did not view it as a significant problem.

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13. (SBU) Investigation and Prosecution of Traffickers:  
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--A. The Eritrean Criminal Code stringently prohibits TIP. Article 605 prohibits trafficking "in women, infants, and young persons." Article 607 prohibits the "organization of traffic in persons," and makes a criminal offense of the "habitual exploitation for pecuniary gain" of prostitutes. No new articles regarding trafficking have been added to the criminal code.

--B. TIP or seducing, enticing, or procuring women and children to engage in prostitution is punishable by a fine and up to five years imprisonment. The Criminal Code also punishes an indecent act with children younger than 15 years by imprisonment for up to 5 years.

--C. Forced labor is prohibited under article 16 of the unimplemented Eritrean Constitution, but there are no known laws or enabling proclamations specific to trafficking for labor exploitation. The GSE, however, conscripted large numbers men under the age of 54 and many women under the age of 47 for national service. The GSE pays national service workers below the nationally established minimum wage, provided no choice of employment, and strictly limited internal movement. The GSE strictly controlled entry and exit of all persons and actively discouraged its citizens of national service age from traveling abroad. No known labor recruitment services for foreign employment operated in Eritrea.

--D. Rape is punishable by up to ten years imprisonment, while rape of a minor, invalid, or by multiple people acting together is punishable by up to fifteen years in prison. Sexual assault is punishable by six months to eight years in prison. The GSE does not have specific laws for trafficking-related rape and sexual assault.

--E. The GSE did not publish accounts of arrests or prosecutions of human traffickers.

--F. Post is unaware of any GSE-sponsored TIP training during the reporting period, and is unaware of any person tried or convicted in court for trafficking violations. Several GSE-sponsored organizations such as the youth union and the workers' union actively incorporated anti-TIP education into outreach programs.

--G. The GSE did not report cooperation with other governments on investigating TIP cases, nor did any resident foreign missions.

--H. The government does not provide this information.

--I. The GSE in 2007 reportedly provided approximately 40 national service workers to hotels in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), but this information was not corroborated. According to the report, the UAE hotel owners directly paid the workers' salaries to GSE, which then paid the workers a small stipend and confiscated the remainder. Similar reports in 2008 maintained the GSE trafficked some national service employees to work in GSE-owned hotels in southern Sudan.

The national service policies allow for the GSE to have total control over the movement and wages of those conscripted. National service is indefinite, devoid of promotion or wage increase, and strips the citizen of his or her right to freedom of movement. Additionally, the GSE remains complicit in conscripting child soldiers, sometimes as young as 15, into the Sawa military training academy which takes the place of the student's final year of high school.

--J. Post is unaware of any government officials prosecuted for trafficking.

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--K. Eritrea does not have legalized prostitution but as of 2007, at least 3,000 prostitutes were believed to be working, including a small number under the age of eighteen. Most prostitutes are self-managed and not accountable to pimps or brothel owners. Security forces patrolling the city at night occasionally arrest prostitutes who spend the night with foreigners.

--L. Eritrea does not contribute international peacekeeping forces.

--M. Eritrea is neither a source nor destination country for child sex tourism. Eritrea's child sex abuse laws have extraterritorial coverage.

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14. (SBU) Protection and Assistance to Victims:  
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--A. The GSE provides no known protection for victims and witnesses of TIP.

--B. The GSE has no known facilities dedicated to trafficking victims.

--C. The GSE does not provide this information.

--D. The GSE does not provide this information.

--E. The GSE does not provide this information.

--F. The GSE does not provide this information.

--G. The GSE does not provide this information.

--H. Eritrea does not have legalized prostitution.

--I. The GSE does not provide this information.

--J. The GSE does not provide this information.

--K. The GSE does not provide funding or other forms of support to

foreign or domestic NGOs for services to trafficking victims. The GSE severely limited the number of foreign NGOs allowed to operate in Eritrea; none operate anti-trafficking programs.

--L. The GSE does not provide this information.

--M. UNICEF and ICRC stated there are no known TIP problems in Eritrea. No NGO provides TIP victim assistance.

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15. (SBU) Prevention:  
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--A. The GSE held no public anti-TIP education campaigns. However, the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS) actively warns the populace of the dangers of leaving the country, including the prospects of being sold into slave or sex labor. During the reporting year, the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) applied for funding through the Italian NGO Istituto Sindacale Di Cooperazione Allo Sviluppo (ISCOC) to assist Eritrean victims of trafficking in Nairobi and Sudan. It is not known, though, if these individuals are victims of smuggling (i.e. have paid individuals to assist in fleeing the country) or are actual victims of trafficking.

--B. The GSE does not provide this information.

--C. The GSE does not engage the UN or any NGOs specifically on TIP.

--D. The MLHW oversees the trafficking portfolio in coordination with Eritrea's overseas embassies. The Ministry did not make a representative available to discuss the issue during the reporting period.

--E. The GSE initiated a community-based rehabilitation program to assist approximately 250 of Eritrea's 3,000 commercial sex workers.

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The GSE reportedly held seminars and workshops to educate the public on the plight of commercial sex workers, but the workshops do not relate to TIP.

--F. Eritrea was not a country of either transit or destination for international child sex tourism.

--G. N/A

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